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TORONTO -- Beginning in January 1990, CBC Toronto will present a programming concept unique to North America ... THE DISABILITY NETWORK, a studio-based 30 minutes weekly current affairs show for the disabled will be produced and hosted by people with disabilities. The program will be telecast on CBC Toronto, Windsor, Ottawa and London, Rudi Carter, Program Director for CBC Toronto, announced today.

A co-production of CBC Toronto and The Centre for Independent Living in Toronto (CILT) Inc., THE DISABILITY NETWORK will be a fast-paced magazine style program serving as a central and easily accessible source of information for people with disabilities, their families and friends across Ontario.

"After many months of planning this project, I believe that we have developed a unique employment equity model", Carter explains. "Having disabled people work alongside CBC staff will provide a welcome opportunity for everyone concerned."

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"I applaud the CBC's initiative in developing this co-production with us," says Vic Willi, Executive Director of the Centre for Independent Living. "THE DISABILITY NETWORK will provide a type of programming that is long overdue. There's been a lot of misinformation and stereotyping regarding people with disabilities, and it is within the power of the media to help overcome barriers to 'normalization'. Our philosophy is based on the self-help model, and the beauty of this program is that it is not something that is being done for people with disabilities, but by people with disabilities."

Because unemployment is the single greatest problem faced by disabled Canadians, many of the stories and interviews on THE DISABILITY NETWORK will deal with employment issues, challenges and opportunities. By employing people with disabilities, the program itself will serve as an employment equity model within the CBC and elsewhere, dispelling stereotypes and raising the profile of the disabled.

As part of this co-production agreement, CBC Toronto will provide office space and production facilities for THE DISABILITY NETWORK. Although hiring will be the responsibility of The Media Connection, CBC producers, managers and executives will assist on hiring boards, and help provide 'hands-on' training for disabled production staff and on-air journalists. To further facilitate this, CBC Toronto will develop a 'buddy system', matching CBC staff with DISABILITY NETWORK staff to provide extra one-on-one help.





THE DISABILITY NETWORK, a 30-month project, will provide a valuable entry point, and an opportunity for training and exposure for individuals with disabilities, which could possibly lead to employment on other CBC television and radio programs. Recruitment for production and on-air staff with a strong commitment to broadcasting will begin immediately.

Funding to the Centre for Independent Living originates from Metro Toronto's The Media Connection which in turn is part of Access Connections. Access Connections is a project developed by Metro which functions as project manager, administering over \$2 million in funding provided by Employment and Immigration Canada under its Innovations Program, as well as other funds raised from private corporations.

Peter Reynolds will act as Executive Producer of THE DISABILITY NETWORK for CBC Toronto. He is a veteran television producer with extensive experience working with persons with disabilities.

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